



# THE NUGGET

NEWSLETTER FOR THE ARMY PACIFIC REGION  
PACIFIC REGION CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OPERATIONS CENTER,  
FORT RICHARDSON, ALASKA

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## **DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

**Jeanne Scharch, Director**



Here we are in the land of the midnight sun - and it seems like there are not enough hours in the day! As all of us juggle work requirements and family/community involvement, we strive for balance. Over the last three months and during the next few months the CPOC staff has done a tremendous balancing act with the support of the managers and commands in the Pacific Region.

RPA Direct and the centralization of RESUMIX went smoothly. The results from the new resume process have been positive and we continue to work to improve both timeliness and quality of referrals.

The Army is currently in the process of the M2M conversions (6JUN-30JUN) - moving records on all Army employees from 8 databases to one centralized database. This means no one has access to DCPDS - so some actions may be delayed. This is counterbalanced with additional focus on announcing vacancies, reviewing applications and issuing referral lists, as well as quality control efforts.

Just 2 weeks after the M2M conversion, DCPDS will be unavailable for the migration to Oracle 11i (18JUL-1AUG), a DOD initiative. Managers should submit any actions that would occur during the 11i downtime early. This will permit balancing of workload to meet the needs of management and employees.

During the brief period when DCPDS is available between M2M and 11i, actions that could not be processed earlier will be processed.

**PLAN AHEAD** - Managers - help us to help you by providing RPAs, with properly completed Gatekeeper checklists, early.

This will allow us all to take advantage of summer activities as well as meet the mission requirements - balance in workload and lifeload - a win-win!

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## **RPA Direct Routing**

Effective Monday, 28 April 2003 all RPAs should be routed to the following CPOC Distribution Group-boxes:

XYZ-5AWARDS/COPD - All RPAs dealing with Awards  
XYZ-5IN\_BOX/COCD - For all actions other than Awards

All other Distribution Group-boxes beginning with XYZ will not be used.

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## **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Catch-Up Contributions Update**

On 27 Nov 02 the President signed Public Law 107-304, which permits eligible Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) participants who are age 50 or older to make tax deferred "catch-up" contributions from their basic pay to their TSP accounts. These contributions are a supplement to the participants' regular employee contributions and do not count against either their statutory contribution limits or the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limit.

Below is an article from Department of Army's most recent civilian personnel bulletin on TSP Catch-Up.

The Thrift Investment Board has released TSP Bulletin 03-4, Catch-up Contributions for TSP Participants Age 50 and Older. Catch-up contributions potentially provide participants over 50 an opportunity to make up for working years when 401(k)s and similar savings plans, like the TSP, were not available. TSP catch-up contributions are made on a pre-tax basis and, therefore, may only be made through payroll deductions.

To be eligible to make TSP catch-up contributions, an employee must be:

1. In a pay status
2. Contributing the allowable maximum to TSP
3. Age 50 years old in the year the catch-up contributions are made
4. Not in the 6-month non-contribution period following receipt of a financial hardship in-service withdrawal

Currently there are over 20,000 Army civilian employees who meet these eligibility requirements.

Catch-up contributions are not subject to the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limits (\$12,000 in 2003). However, catch-up contributions are limited each year as follows:

### **Year Maximum Contribution**

2003 \$2,000  
2004 \$3,000  
2005 \$4,000  
2006 and thereafter \$5,000

(Catch-up contributions are not subject to the open season rules and more than one election may be made in any given year so long as the annual limit is not exceeded).

The Defense Finance and Accounting System and personnel systems must be adapted to allow for catch-up contributions to be withheld. TSP Bulletin 03-4 states the intention to implement the catch-up contributions program in July 2003 and the effective date as early as the first pay period in August. The implementation date for each Federal agency will, however, be dependent upon adaptation of payroll and personnel systems.

Employees who may want to participate in TSP catch-up contributions should begin now to plan for a short time period to have payroll deductions made during 2003 following announcement of an implementation date. For example, if the first pay period TSP catch-up contributions can be withheld is September 26, 2003, an employee would have seven pay periods for withholdings to meet the \$2,000 maximum contribution for 2003, about \$300 a pay period. TSP bulletins may be viewed on the TSP web site at <http://www.tsp.gov> under the section, Info for Agency Reps. The Army Benefits Center - Civilian (ABC-C) website <https://www.abc.army.mil> will continue to be updated with the latest information about TSP catch-up contributions as it becomes available. Employees may also contact the ABC-C at 1-877-276-9287 (see the web site for outside of the continental United States toll free numbers).

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## **Emergency Contact Data Instructions**

Due to the recent terrorist attacks and the continuing threats against all Americans, Army found it necessary to implement an automated method whereby all employees who are U.S. citizens may have their emergency contact data readily available in the event of an emergency or death of an employee.

The emergency data you provide will be stored and made available to only those authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying your emergency contact(s) and processing or assisting with the necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

A screen consisting of the necessary data elements is available for you to complete on the Army website, <https://cpsapp2.belvoir.army.mil/emergencycontact/default.asp> or via <http://cpol.army.mil> under "What's New". In order to gain access to the database and enter your emergency contact information, you will first need to register as a "new user". Your social security number is being used since it is the one account that distinguishes you as an employee without duplication. Please note that when entering your social security number, it will not be

displayed on the screen. As you enter your social security number, it will be represented on the screen by asterisks (\*).

The next screen will provide you with instructions to establish your password. After you have established your password, you will be able to proceed and enter your emergency contact data. Once you have successfully entered your emergency contact data, you can update and change the information as changes occur. You must enter your user id and password each time you wish to access your account to modify or update your existing data.

As a practical tip, if the primary emergency contact listed is not an immediate relative, it is important for you to inform your emergency contacts in advance about how to locate your next of kin and/or dependents.

Your cooperation is needed to enable your agency to promptly notify the emergency contact of your choosing. Failure to provide this information could result in delay in the notification to your next of kin in the event of an emergency or death. Disclosure of your social security number is voluntary; however, failure to provide your social security number may delay the notification process. You'll be asked to review your emergency contact data on an annual basis and help keep the information current.

You should also consider updating designation of beneficiary forms if you believe the information is out of date.

The email address established for this project is [ECHELP@asamra.hoffman.army.mil](mailto:ECHELP@asamra.hoffman.army.mil). If you do not have access to a personal computer or the Internet, you should contact your first line supervisor.

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### [Open Seasons](#)

- The current Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season closes on 6/30/03, the next Open Season will be 10/15/03 through 12/31/03.
- The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season will begin 11/10/03 and will close on 12/08/03.

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### [myPay: The Key To Controlling Your Pay](#)

The website formerly known as Employee Member Self Service (E/MSS) has undergone a make over. This site, which gives employees online access to their leave and earnings statements (LES), can now be found at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>. Employees are encouraged to use MYPAY to view and print their biweekly LES instead of

having them mailed to their homes. Electing to receive your LES electronically can result in significant postage savings. In addition, your LES can be viewed and printed as early as the Friday preceding the actual pay date. The current and the two previous LESs are always available for viewing and/or printing.

Additional features of MYPAY allow you to view and print tax statements; change federal and state tax withholdings; update bank account and electronic fund transfer information; manage allotments; make address changes; purchase U.S. Savings Bonds; and view and print travel vouchers.

Visit the website and obtain a copy of the new brochure on MYPAY (listed under Hot Topics). If you do not have a Personal Identification Number (PIN), you can obtain it via the current website.

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### [New OPM Position Classification Standard](#)

The Office of Personnel Management has issued for immediate use the new Job Family Standard (JFS) for the Equipment, Facilities, and Services Group, GS-1600 and the new Flysheet for Equipment, Facilities, and Services Assistance Work, GS-1603.

The GS-1600 JFS covers two-grade interval administrative work in the GS-1600 occupational group. It provides series definitions, titling instructions, occupational information, and grading criteria for the covered occupations. It also provides criteria for managerial work in three series: GS-1601 Equipment, Facilities, and Services; GS-1630 Cemetery Administration; and GS-1654 Printing Services.

The Flysheet establishes a new series to cover single-grade interval administrative support work in the Equipment, Facilities, and Services Group. It provides a series definition, titling instructions, and guidance for evaluating this type of work.

A memorandum is being released to all MACOMs with more complete information and implementing instructions.

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### [Central Resume Processing Center \(CRPC\)](#)

Beginning 12 May 2003, our new Central Resume Processing Center will begin processing resumes you submit by email, hard copy or other means for vacant jobs in the Europe, Northeast, North Central, South Central, Southwest, and Pacific regions. If you are applying for jobs in the Korea or West regions, you must continue to submit your application directly to that region by going to their homepage via Civilian Personnel On Line (CPOL) and sending your resume following the instructions on their individual sites.

The new central resume processing center will also be the central point for answering any questions you may have regarding the submission of your resume or the use of any of the Army automated programs such as the resume builder, the Applicant Notification System Web Enabled Response (ANSWER), or Self-Nomination for Army jobs. At this time, the Center will support all Army regions except Korea and West Regions.

We prefer that you use our resume builder to create and submit your resume electronically. The Army Resume Builder is located at [https://cpol.army.mil/rb/rb\\_entry.cgi](https://cpol.army.mil/rb/rb_entry.cgi). However, if you do not desire to use the Army Resume Builder, you may submit your resume to the center using surface mail, email or other means. Please follow the instructions in our job application kit to create your resume and assure that all of the required information is provided. Our Job Application Kit is located at <http://cpol.army.mil/employ/jobkit/>.

Please be aware that you do not need to submit a new resume if you already had one in the Centralized Resume Database prior to 12 May 2003.

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### [Flexible Spending Account \(FSA\) Delayed](#)

The Federal Flexible Benefits Plan ("FedFlex") has experienced another delay. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced on May 19, (the first day of the planned early enrollment opportunity period), that the program administrator, SHPS, cannot take enrollments at this time. OPM has halted enrollments while they review agency options regarding administrative fees in response to anticipated Congressional action. Following the review, OPM will announce when FSA enrollments will be accepted. OPM has not responded to questions regarding the possibility of a new early enrollment period. DoD employees had previously been notified that the Defense Finance and Accounting Service would not be ready to deduct contributions from earnings for FSA accounts until September, thus delaying participation in the program. OPM has asked that employees continue to be encouraged to visit the FSA web site <http://www.fsafeds.com/> or to call the toll free number 1-877-FSAFEDS(372-3337) to speak with a SHPS benefits counselor. The TDD number is 800-952-0450. Information will be provided regarding enrollment opportunities as it becomes available.

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### [New Wage Bracket Withholding Rates](#)

On May 28, 2003, President Bush signed the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003. Among its

provisions, the Act provides for decreases in Federal tax rate withholding brackets.

The Defense Civilian Pay System will implement the decreases in Federal tax withholding rates effective the pay period beginning June 1, 2003.

An employee may change his/her federal income tax withholding by completing Internal Revenue Service Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate. The preferred method for making a change to Federal income tax withholding is through the automated system, MyPay (formerly Employee Member Self Service (E/MSS)). The website for MyPay is <https://mypay.dfas.mil/>. The telephone number for the MyPay Interactive Voice Response System is 1-877-363-3677.

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### [Civilian Human Resource \(CHR\) Training](#)

The Civilian Personnel Operations Center Management Agency (CPOCMA) Training Management Division has added six CHR courses to the FY 03 schedule. The courses will be conducted at the CPOCMA training facility at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Pending receipt of funds, travel and per diem for selected participants will be centrally funded.

The courses are:

- HR Advisor/Consultant August 18-22, 2003
- Basic Management-Employee Relations August 25-29, 2003
- Basic Labor Relations September 8-12, 2003
- WASS/CIVFORS September 17-19, 2003
- Labor/MER Seminar September 23-25, 2003
- Basic Staffing September 22-26, 2003

Another HR Advisor/Consultant course will be presented on September 8-12, 2003.

Course descriptions may be found at <http://www.cpocma.army.mil/tmd.htm>; applicants who meet the criteria for the courses may apply online at the same website. Applications should be submitted no later than July 18, 2003.

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### [Free Electronic Newsletters for Federal Employees](#)

There are several commercial websites available that offer electronic newsletters that provide useful information about issues affecting civilian and government employees such as: financial planning, pay and benefits, homeland security, travel and per diem, TSP, retirement planning, insurance, investing, and more. Also provided is information on

upcoming conferences, seminars, and training. There is even a website that offers a discussion forum in the event that you would like to share your opinions, views, and comments with others on various topics.

All newsletters are FREE. For more information and if you wish to receive any of the newsletters, click on the links below and sign up for a free email subscription:

<http://www.fpmi.com>  
<http://fedmanager.com>  
<http://govexec.com>  
<http://www.federsoup.com>  
<http://www.fedweek.com>

Any of the Federal Employees News Digest (FEND) websites below will take you to the Federal Daily newsletter where you can also sign up for a free subscription:

<http://www.clubfed.com>  
<http://www.fendonline.com>  
<http://www.fedforce.com>  
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## Centralization of Army's Civilian HR Databases and Upgrade to Oracle 11i

Army's transformation from Civilian Human Resource databases at each Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) to a consolidated database at one central site is proceeding on schedule. The transition period began on 6 Jun 2003 and **will be complete by 30 Jun 2003**. The centralization project includes both CONUS and OCONUS regions.

On 18 July 2003, shortly after the centralization of Army regional databases, Army and the other Department of Defense components will begin the transition to Oracle 11i, which is the web-based version of DCPDS.

During these transition periods, the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) will not be available, so personnel actions can not be initiated or processed.

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## What Can The ABC-C Do For You?

The Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C) is a centralized service center for Department of Army civilian

employees. You can access the ABC-C by telephone via a toll-free number, or through the Internet. The ABC-C automated systems are available almost 24 hours a day. Benefit counselors are available to assist employees between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. CST.

The ABC-C can assist you with the below listed benefits. We also process actions associated with your benefits:

- Life insurance
- Health insurance
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Death/Survivorship
- Retirement estimates
- Retirement
- Buy-back of military and/or civilian time for retirement purposes

**As a new employee**, the ABC-C is where all of the benefits elections are made after you start working.

**As a current employee**, the ABC-C is where you can change your benefits elections when necessary.

During open seasons for benefits, you can create transactions for changes, view those pending changes, and view the new elections after the effective date.

You can also inquire about paying for military or civilian time that you wish to count towards retirement – and, you can estimate retirement benefits on the web site using the calculators. (Once you have decided to retire, you will forward your application to the ABC-C for processing.)

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## The ABC-C Web Site

The web address is <https://www.abc.army.mil>. You can also reach the ABC-C via the CPOL web site by clicking on the “links” button on the CPOL home page. Using the ABC-C web site is the ideal way to review your personal benefits information using your Personal Identification Number (PIN).

For example, you can look into upcoming open seasons, initiate changes when necessary, and plan your retirement. Or, you can obtain general information on health and life insurance, retirement estimates, and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

You can also access information helpful to new employees, and you can use a diagram that will help you use the web site or telephone system.

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